

An Analysis of Walgreens' Current Human Capital Challenges and Recommendations

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PSYCH -GA 2032 – 0020 - I/O Psychology

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November 20, 2023

Executive Summary

Walgreens, the second-largest pharmacy chain in the United States, currently faces pharmacist walkouts driven by dissatisfaction. This analysis aims to identify critical leverage points and present detailed proposals to optimize the situation for Walgreens' Executive Leadership Team starting January 2024. Beyond employees' concerns about overloading and understaffing, our assessment delves into performance measurement, compensation, upward communication, and person-organization fit, alongside evaluating Walgreens' current strategies.

The recommendations encompass clarifying roles, reassessing metrics, adjusting compensation, implementing training programs, and fostering an inclusive organizational culture. Drawing on the *Job Characteristics Model*, our proposal emphasizes work redesign to align roles and enhance motivation. To bridge communication gaps, we propose establishing an upward feedback pipeline and exploring unionization, complemented by regular surveys to bolster organizational communication. Stress-management interventions and wellness programs, grounded in restoring psychological capital, aim to alleviate pharmacist stress. Prioritization of recommendations underscores the immediate focus on work redesign, compensation adjustment, and establishing an upward feedback pipeline for swift impact and stakeholder benefit.

Current Assessment

Company Background and Job Analysis

Ranked as the second-largest pharmacy in the United States (see Appendix A), Walgreens is currently grappling with challenges as pharmacists in its nationwide retail stores initiate walkouts, expressing discontent and seeking dialogues with management. Evidently,

prevalent issues encompass overloading and understaffing, necessitating a systematic assessment to identify problems and devise strategies for 2024.

Health-related professionals at Walgreens' retail pharmacy, including pharmacists and pharmacy technicians, are expected to possess *knowledge of* medicine, customer service, federal pharmacy laws and regulations, etc. These roles require *skills in* active communication, problem-solving, decision-making, multitasking, analytical and critical thinking, as detailed in O*Net and LinkedIn job descriptions (see Appendix E) (see comprehensive KSAOs in Appendix B).

Daily tasks involve filling prescriptions, counseling patients, performing wellness services, and handling administrative duties. Currently, pharmacy employees report feelings of being overworked and exhausted, illustrating role overload exacerbated by rising consumer demands for vaccinations and testing (Constantino, 2023a). Additional challenges include copay and reimbursement issues with insurance companies due to role ambiguity, coupled with heightened work expectations from management, leading to unreasonable workloads and a reconfiguration of time spent on daily tasks (see Appendix C) (Constantino, 2023b).

Employee Experience Assessment

Performance Management

Walgreens sets task expectations based on team size rather than location specifics. Despite the company's assertion of eliminating task-based metrics last year, employees highlight a persistent focus on performance goals, such as specific prescription filling quotas and vaccine administration targets, with insufficient attention to customer service quality (Constantino, 2023b). The incongruity between corporate statements and frontline experiences raises apprehensions about the clarity of performance expectations, intensifying the pressure on

pharmacists and technicians to fulfill their roles effectively, especially in the context of the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic (Constantino, 2023b).

Compensation

The issue of compensation is a longstanding grievance among Walgreens' retail pharmacy staff, amplified during the pandemic by complaints of understaffed teams and increasing work expectations (Constantino, 2023a; Goodkind, 2023a). Despite pharmacists and pharmacy technicians playing a pivotal role, the average hourly payment of \$53.46 may be perceived as inadequate (Indeed., 2023). Addressing compensation concerns is crucial for ensuring employee satisfaction and retention, especially in a sector critical to the company's financial success.

Upward Communication

A significant challenge in the employee experience at Walgreens is the perceived lack of responsiveness to concerns raised by pharmacy workers. According to an APhA and NASPA survey, complaints brought to management sometimes go unanswered or receive delayed responses (Schommer et al., 2021). The absence of a timely and effective upward feedback pipeline contributes to a sense of isolation among pharmacists, hindering issue resolution and potentially impacting overall employee morale, organizational belonging, and the psychological contract (Constantino, 2023a; Howes & Muchinsky, 2022).

Person-Organization Fit

The misalignment between Walgreens' values and employee expectations is evident, prioritizing profit-driven activities over comprehensive patient care. While consumers trust pharmacists for diagnostic and prescribing services, the emphasis on highly profitable vaccinations compromises customer care quality (Rebelo, 2023; Goodkind & Maruf, 2023). This contributes to employees feeling overwhelmed and stretched thin, undermining their confidence

in providing safe care. The resulting misalignment between organizational priorities and employee values challenges a harmonious person-organization fit, potentially impacting overall employee well-being.

In conclusion, issues in performance management, compensation, upward feedback, and person-organization fit underscore critical current challenges. Addressing these concerns provides an opportunity to have leverage with a supportive work environment for employees.

Current Implementation

Walgreens is proactively tackling workforce challenges through recruitment, retention, and reward initiatives to enhance the working experience for pharmacy staff. Additionally, the implementation of micro-fulfillment centers reflects a strategic use of technology to centralize operations, alleviating the workload on pharmacy teams (Salgado, 2023). This approach is designed to enable pharmacists to focus on customer-centric tasks, emphasizing efficiency and patient care.

Fraser Engerman, senior director of external relations at Walgreens, has detailed the company's actions addressing concerns related to workloads, wages, and hiring (Goodkind & Maruf, 2023). Substantial investments in wages and hiring bonuses, especially in challenging-to-staff locations, aim to support recruitment and retention efforts (Constantino, 2023a). The creation of specific roles for administrative tasks signifies a systematic approach to resolving identified issues, highlighting a commitment to overall employee well-being.

Recommendations and Prioritization

Building on the current initiatives acknowledged by Walgreens leadership and the comprehensive I/O psychological assessment, we have formulated several additional

recommendations aligning with general strategies. Furthermore, we have conducted a thorough analysis of prioritization to schedule practical remedies effectively.

General Strategies: More People, Better Conditions

Generally speaking, having more people and providing better conditions are key points to optimize employees' working experience at Walgreens to tackle overload and understaffing. In terms of augmenting the workforce and improving working conditions, I recommend Walgreens to involve following multifaceted approaches: (1) *Clarify tasks and responsibilities on key roles to mitigate role ambiguity in talent acquisition and performance management*; (2) *Reevaluate performance metrics and feedback mechanisms to promote internal communication*; (3) *Adjust compensation level and paid overtime to ensure competitiveness*; (4) *Implement ongoing training programs to promote leadership and alleviate employees stress*; (5) *Foster collaborative team dynamics and inclusive organizational culture*. To conduct a more detailed analysis of the feasibility and reliability of the recommendations, the following content draws inspiration from insights from similar organizations and industrial and organizational psychological research.

Insights from Similar Organization: CVS

In September, CVS faced a walkout in Kansas City, akin to Walgreens' current challenge. CVS's short-term solutions, such as increased staffing, paid overtime, and temporary process suspension, along with their long-term commitment to hiring and training, provide valuable insights for Walgreens. These measures partly addressed employee concerns, showcasing positive communication outcomes and resolving the walkouts. It's worth noting that CVS did not implement these measures nationwide (Le Coz, 2023). The joint walkouts in early November by health-related professionals from both Walgreens and CVS emphasize the necessity for more comprehensive interventions (Goodkind & Rothenberg, 2023).

Additional Recommendations from I/O Research

Work Redesign with Job Characteristics Model

One of the crucial complaints from pharmacists at Walgreens is the role ambiguity and overload as their main tasks unexpectedly changed from filling prescriptions and counseling patients to providing vaccines and administrative duties. Utilizing the *Job Characteristics Model* based on work design theory to clarify role responsibilities and redesign workstreams can promote a better understanding of the positions in the talent acquisition process, contribute to performance management improvement, and motivate individuals' energized behaviors (Howes & Muchinsky, 2022).

In detail, we recommend integrating *skills variety* and *task identity* to elucidate pharmacists' core duties and emphasize the focus of consumer services as the *task significance*, entrusting employees with *autonomy* to ensure the flexibility needed in counseling patients. This initiative can assist the hiring team in discussions about job descriptions, helping Walgreens create new positions to separate administrative tasks from pharmacists. This allows them to focus on providing reliable medical services. Simultaneously, it involves adjusting the performance assessment metrics from the previous quota-based system to a consumer-centered evaluation method, which may include data from consumer satisfaction surveys and complaints.

Upward Feedback Pipeline and Employee Unionization

The recent walkout highlights communication issues between employees and leadership at Walgreens, impeding a harmonious person-organization fit. The longstanding absence of effective upward feedback pipelines, as revealed in a 2021 survey, necessitates a dual focus (Schommer et al., 2021). We recommend that Walgreens enhance feedback pipelines and provide leadership training. Using online platforms to gather opinions from retail pharmacists nationwide is a cost-efficient approach. Additionally, training workshops for leadership in giving

feedback can support 360 feedback in the performance management process, enabling managers to stay connected with frontline employees and fostering an organizational climate of care and belonging.

Considering that the United Food & Commercial Workers International Union (UFCW) supported Walgreens and CVS workers in the recent walkouts, the union serves as a natural channel for employees to express their opinions and attitudes (UFCW, 2023). Therefore, encouraging regular communication between the organization and the labor union can be another effective means of external assistance.

Regular Surveys for Job Attitudes

The inherent essence of a pharmacist's role, dedicated to providing care and assistance to patients, naturally generates personal and societal impact, fostering vigor, dedication, and, ultimately, high levels of employee engagement (Howes & Muchinsky, 2022). However, the chaotic and exhausting working environment poses a significant threat to sustaining this engagement and job satisfaction, potentially triggering a detrimental cycle.

To address these challenges, it is imperative for Walgreens to implement a strategy for continuous improvement. This involves conducting regular job attitudes surveys, such as job satisfaction and employee engagement surveys, utilizing platforms like Peakon or Culture Amp to gather anonymous feedback. By incorporating valuable insights from employees into the organizational decision-making process, Walgreens can proactively address concerns and create an environment that fosters sustained employee engagement and job satisfaction.

Stress-Management Interventions and Wellness Programs

As highlighted in our previous analysis of KSAOs, pharmacists in retail stores are frequently tasked with efficiently processing vast amounts of information and providing accurate prescription recommendations, all while offering emotional support to patients (see Appendix

C). The nature of their work involves various stressors related to workload and workflow pressures. To enhance the internal working experience, we recommend that Walgreens implement stress-management interventions and wellness programs for employees quarterly or as needed. These initiatives should be future-focused, aiming to restore employee resources as psychological capital to promote self-efficiency and resilience (Howes & Muchinsky, 2022).

Prioritization of Recommendations

Recommendations were provided to optimize the existing problems identified in the assessment phase for Walgreens' Executive Leadership Team. The priority for each recommendation was determined based on the size of the immediate impact they would produce once implemented and the extent to which they benefit key stakeholders (see Appendix D).

The 'Function' column illustrates the aspects of the human capital cycle affected by each recommendation. The 'Effort' column refers to a mix of manpower and resources dedicated to the particular recommendation. 'Cost' estimations considered technological/logistical costs, the frequency of expenditure (recurring vs. one-time), and potential revenue lost from employees engaging in training/workshops as opposed to Business as Usual (BAU). Development time and frequency of each recommendation were provided when appropriate.

Considering the request from Walgreens' Executive Leadership Team, the implementation time for every recommendation starts from the 1st Quarter of 2024. Based on these facets, we recommend that Walgreens prioritize Work Redesign, Compensation Adjustment, and Upward Feedback Pipeline Establishment.

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[us/#:~:text=U.S.%20pharmacies%20ranked%20by%20prescription%20drugs%20market%20share%202022&](https://www.statista.com/statistics/734171/pharmacies-ranked-by-rx-market-share-in-us/#:~:text=U.S.%20pharmacies%20ranked%20by%20prescription%20drugs%20market%20share%202022&)

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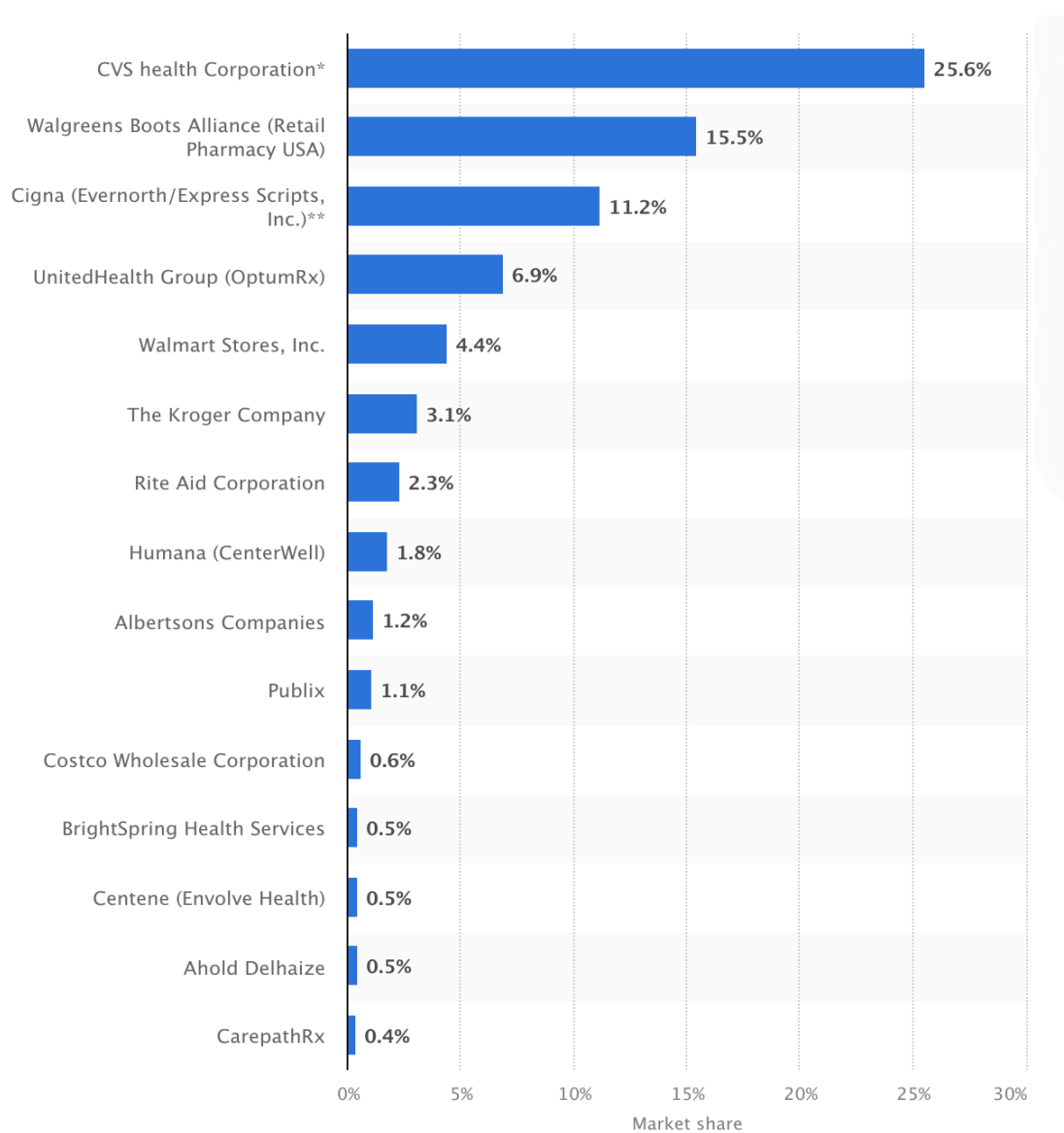
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Appendix A - Top U.S. Pharmacies Ranked by Drug Market Share 2022



Note. Source from Statista (Mikulic, 2023).

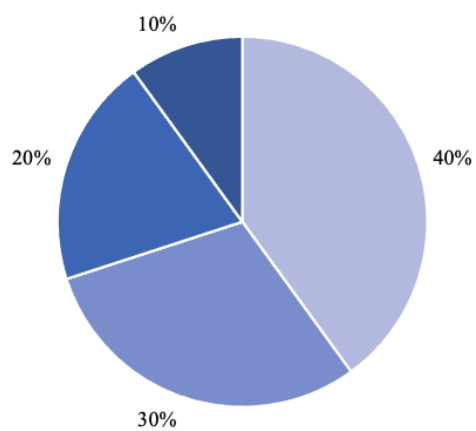
Appendix B - KSAOs for Health-related Professionals

Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Knowledge of medicine, biology, chemistry, mathematics➤ Knowledge of pharmaceuticals, drug interactions, and dosage forms➤ Knowledge of prescription reimbursement processes➤ Knowledge of customer and personal service➤ Knowledge of state and federal pharmacy laws and regulations➤ Knowledge of administrative
Skill	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❑ Skill in active communication❑ Skill in problem-solving❑ Skill in decision-making❑ Skill in multitasking❑ Skill in collaboration and teamwork❑ Skill in social perspective
Ability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Analytical and critical thinking● Adaptability and resilience● Attention to details● Accountability
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Teamwork✓ Time and stress management✓ Ethical conduct✓ Habit of continuous learning

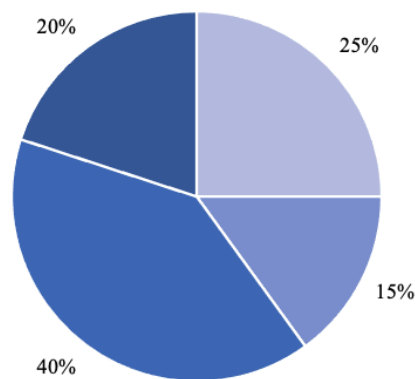
*Note. Source from O*Net and LinkedIn. <https://www.onetonline.org/link/summary/29-1051.00>;
<https://jobs.walgreens.com/en/job/-/1242/56693110032?codes=LinkedIn>*

Appendix C – Time Spent Proportion on Daily Tasks

Time Spent Proportion on Daily Tasks According to JD



Time Spent Proportion on Daily Tasks in Reality



■ Filling Prescriptions ■ Counseling Patients ■ Performing Other Wellness Services ■ Administrative Duties

Appendix D - Recommendations Prioritization Matrix

Recommendation	Function	Impact	Effort	Cost	Timing
Work Redesign	Talent Acquisition	High	Low	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Development time <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 1 month ● Frequency <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ On-going
	Performance Management				
	Long-term Motivation				
Compensation Adjustment	Compensation & Benefits	High	Low	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Development time <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 1-2 weeks
Upward Feedback Pipeline Establishment	Performance Management	High	Medium	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Development time <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 1-2 months ● Frequency <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ On-going
	Leadership				
	Organizational Culture				
Regular Surveys for Job Attitudes	Long-term Motivation	High	Medium	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Development time <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 1-2 weeks ● Frequency <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Bimonthly
Stress Management Interventions and Wellness Programs	Training	High	High	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Development time <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 1 month ● Frequency <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Quarterly
	Organizational Culture				

Note. All implementation time starts from Q1 2024 onwards;

Key for interpreting the table

- *Dark Blue - high priority*
- *Medium blue - medium priority*

Appendix E - Job Description Examples (Pharmacist & Pharmacy Technician) at

Walgreens

Pharmacist (Full or Part Time)

Walgreens · New York, New York

Job Objectives

Provides pharmacy consulting services with empathy to patients regarding the effective usage of medications and awareness with drug interactions. Offers preventive and clinical healthcare services, including immunizations, diagnostic testing, and patient outcomes services.

Responsible for ensuring the proper compounding, dispensation, review, and verification of prescribed medications within regulatory guidelines, company policies and procedures. Supports the efficient workflow of the pharmacy and assists the pharmacy manager in identifying ways to optimize pharmacy financials, inventory management and enhance patient experience.

Job Responsibilities/Tasks

Patient Experience

- Engages patients by greeting them and offering assistance with products and services. Resolves patient issues in a timely manner and answers questions to ensure a positive patient experience.
- Models and shares customer service best practices with all team members to deliver a distinctive and joyful experience, including interpersonal habits that show care (e.g., greeting, eye contact, courtesy, etc.) and Walgreens service traits (e.g., demonstrating curiosity to identify needs and proactively helping, servicing until satisfied, championing empathy and inclusivity, etc.).
- Connects with patients by anticipating needs and proactively offering services. Supports efforts on enhancing patient experience by increasing awareness of healthcare services offered through Walgreens (e.g., patient consultation, medication management, drug therapy reviews, and perform clinical, or wellness services such as immunizations, diagnostic testing, and patient outcomes services) thereby promoting the shift of the Walgreens pharmacy role from transactional to interpersonal.
- Participates and assists in events that reflect the unique communities we serve as requested by Store Manager, Healthcare Supervisor, District Manager or Pharmacy Manager.

Operations

- Counsels' patients and answers their questions regarding usage of medicine, side effects, interactions, contraindications, patient information privacy, generics, less expensive medicines, over-the-counter products, and refers to medical provider as needed to ensure medication is taken correctly, health needs addressed, and satisfaction with service.
- Performs pharmacist tasks including compounding, drug therapy reviews, verification, and medication management.

- Reviews, interprets, and accurately dispenses prescribed medications when necessitated by workload.
- Ensures the pharmacy operates in accordance with regulations, company policies and standards. Assists pharmacy manager with establishing procedures that promotes the efficient workflow of the pharmacy including assigning roles, coordinating activities, and soliciting team member suggestions. Responsible for the opening and closing of the pharmacy and shift change duties.
- Ensures the use of all elements of the Good Faith Dispensing policy in conjunction with state and federal controlled substance laws when filling prescriptions. The Product Review/Retail Fill Process Pharmacist is responsible for ensuring that elements of Good Faith are present.
- Maintains current knowledge of information technology associated with pharmacy systems including workflow, prescription fulfillment, billing, clinical documentation, training, inventory management, and point of sale registers to provide support to patients as well as pharmacy staff. Seeks new and better ways to further promote productivity.
- Ensures the accurate processing of insurance claims to resolve patient issues and prevent payment rejections. Follows up with insurance companies and medical providers and participates in 3rd-party audit.
- Follow-up with medical providers' offices to clarify prescribed medications, dosages, refills, interactions, and allergies to suggest alternative medications, and answer medical provider questions.
- Performs clinical and wellness services such as immunizations, diagnostic testing, disease state management and other healthcare services.
- Assists and supports the pharmacy manager in analyzing performance data including pharmacy financial, customer service, and implementation of procedures for pharmacy asset protection and inventory management.
- Develops and maintains good connections with local medical community including physicians, nurses, and other healthcare providers. Participates in community outreach activities to promote the pharmacy business, enhance growth opportunities, and provide more joyful lives through better health.
- Partners with centralized support for patient registration, exception resolution, and assists with resolving patient issues. In virtual environments, conducts virtual product review by following specific company procedures and guidelines.

People & Performance Management

- Assists the Pharmacy Manager with staff hiring and training. Reinforces the direction of Pharmacy Manager in staff performance by coaching, and providing constructive feedback, monitoring customer service, and fostering team member development.
- Promotes teamwork and motivates team members by establishing expectations, monitors and recognizes progress, and fosters a shared vision.

Training & Personal Development

- Maintains current knowledge and required licensing/credentialing/certification as established by federal and state regulations to provide such clinical services.

- Maintains current knowledge and skills related to pharmacy and healthcare by reading pharmacy related journals, company publications, and communications. Maintains awareness of developments in retail and management and pursues best practices that would enhance performance.
- Obtains necessary certifications, education credits and training, including learning modules, as required by the Company.
- Seeks professional development by monitoring one's performance, solicits for constructive feedback, and leverages pharmacy manager and store manager as mentor and coach.

Communications

- Supports the Pharmacy Manager and Store Manager by communicating relevant corporate health and wellness services or strategy information to pharmacy staff.

Basic Qualifications

- BS in Pharmacy or Pharmacist Degree from an accredited educational institution.
- Current pharmacist licensure in the states within the district.
- Experience performing prescription dispensing activities that demonstrate a strong working knowledge of applicable state and federal controlled substance laws.
- Certified Immunizer or willing to become an immunizer within 90 days of hire.

Preferred Qualifications

- At least 1 year experience as a pharmacist in a retail setting including prescription filling and verification, records and legal compliance, pharmacy operations, pharmacy software and technology systems and insurance.

An Equal Opportunity Employer, including disability/veterans.

This information is being provided to promote pay transparency and equal employment opportunities at Walgreens. The current salary range for this position is \$52.00 - \$74.80 / hour. The actual hourly salary within this range that you will be offered will depend on a variety of factors including geography, skills and abilities, education, experience and other relevant factors.

Pharmacy Technician

Walgreens · Brooklyn, NY

About the job

- In accordance with state and federal regulations, assists the pharmacist, under direct supervision, in the practice of pharmacy. Assists the pharmacist in the performance of other Pharmacy Department duties in accordance with Company policies and procedures.
- Responsible for using pharmacy systems to obtain patient and drug information and process prescriptions. If PTCB or ExCPT certified, assists with and coaches pharmacy

technicians in the operation of pharmacy systems and cashiers in the operation of the pharmacy cash registers.

- Models and delivers a distinctive and delightful customer experience.

Customer Experience

- Engages customers and patients by greeting them and offering assistance with products and services. Resolves customer issues and answers questions to ensure a positive customer experience.
- Models and shares customer service best practices with all team members to deliver a distinctive and delightful customer experience, including interpersonal habits (e.g., greeting, eye contact, courtesy, etc.) and Walgreens service traits (e.g., offering help proactively, identifying needs, servicing until satisfied, etc.).
- Develops strong relationships with most valuable customers.

Operations

- Under the supervision by the pharmacist, assist in the practice of pharmacy, in accordance with state, federal, and company policy. Reviews and complies with the Walgreen Co. Pharmacy Code of Conduct.
- Performs duties as assigned by Pharmacy Manager, Staff Pharmacist and Store Manager including utilizing pharmacy systems to enter patient and drug information, ensuring information is entered correctly, filling prescriptions by retrieving, counting and pouring pharmaceutical drugs, verifying medicine is correct, and checking for possible interactions. Assists pharmacists in scheduling and maintaining work flow.
- Reports, immediately, prescription errors to pharmacist on duty and adheres to Company policies and procedures in relation to pharmacy errors and the Quality Improvement Program.
- Strictly adheres to the Walgreen Co. policy regarding Good Faith Dispensing during all applicable prescription dispensing activities.
- Responsible and accountable for registering all related sales on assigned cash register, collects and handles cash as required. Takes customer to OTC aisle when possible to assist in locating products.
- Handles telephone calls that do not require personal attention of the pharmacist, including those to physicians.
- Processes (corrects and resubmits) manual claims for third party program prescription services in a timely and efficient manner, and performs other clerical duties, as assigned by the Pharmacy Manager.
- Assists and supports Pharmacy Department on inventory management activities, such as, ordering, unpacking, checking and storing shipment of pharmaceuticals. Maintains knowledge of Company asset protection techniques, and files claims for warehouse overages (merchandise received, but not billed), shortages (merchandise billed, but not received), order errors or damaged goods involving Rx drugs.
- May assist pharmacist in administering clinical services including the collection and proper labeling of blood/urine samples from patients and other clinical services as required; assists pharmacy staff in coordination of clinical services, Walgreens healthcare clinics and external providers.

- Assists Pharmacy Manager and Staff Pharmacist in developing and maintaining good relationships with the local medical community, including physicians, nurses, and other health care providers, by medical provider detailing and outreach to health groups, retirement homes, nursing homes, and other forums for enhancing growth opportunities.
- Assists with exterior and interior maintenance by ensuring the Pharmacy Department is stocked with adequate supplies, clean, neat and orderly in condition and appearance.
- Complies with all company policies and procedures; maintains respectful relationships with coworkers.
- Completes special assignments and other tasks as assigned.

Training & Personal Development

- Earns and maintains PTCB or ExCPT certification through the designated PTCB training program and/or state required certification/registration. Otherwise, earns PTCB or ExCPT certification as condition of promotion to senior technician.
- Attends training and completes PPLs requested by Manager and acquires continuing education credits. Maintains knowledge and skill in healthcare and pharmacy, including latest news and developments.

Basic Qualifications

- Must be fluent in reading, writing, and speaking English. (Except in Puerto Rico)
- Requires willingness to work flexible schedule, including evening and weekend hours.

Preferred Qualifications

- Prefer six months of experience in a retail environment.
- Prefer to have prior work experience with Walgreens.
- Prefer good math skills so they can fill prescriptions accurately, including counting, measuring and weighing medications.
- Prefer good computer skills.
- Prefer the knowledge of store inventory control.
- Prefer PTCB certification.

An Equal Opportunity Employer, including disability/veterans.

This information is being provided to promote pay transparency and equal employment opportunities at Walgreens. The current salary range for this position is \$14.50 - \$29.00 / hour. The actual hourly salary within this range that you will be offered will depend on a variety of factors including geography, skills and abilities, education, experience and other relevant factors